

PERNIK

the Town of

KRAKRA



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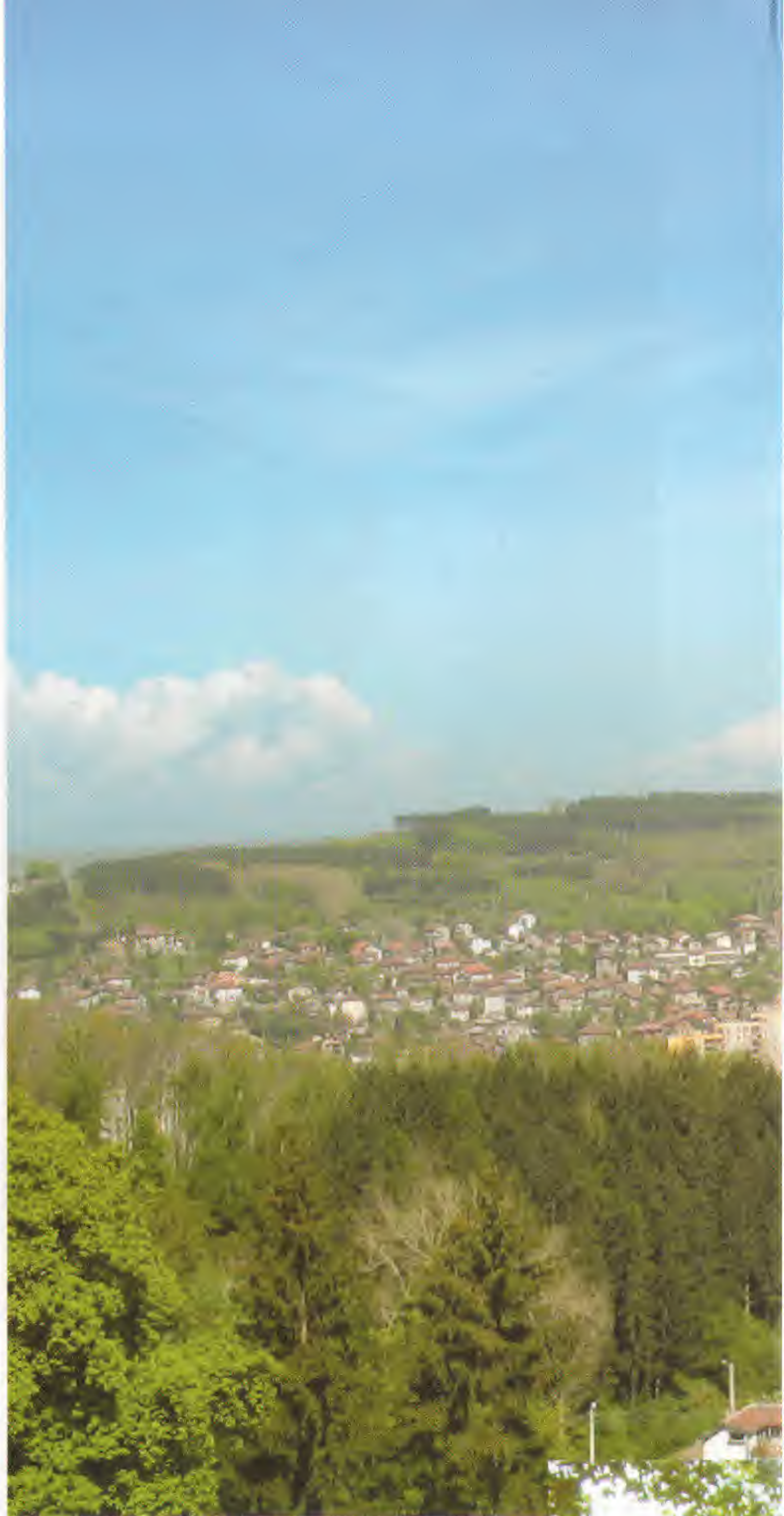
History, Culture and Traditions
in the Municipality of Pernik



**BULGARIAN
DIPLOMATIC
REVIEW**



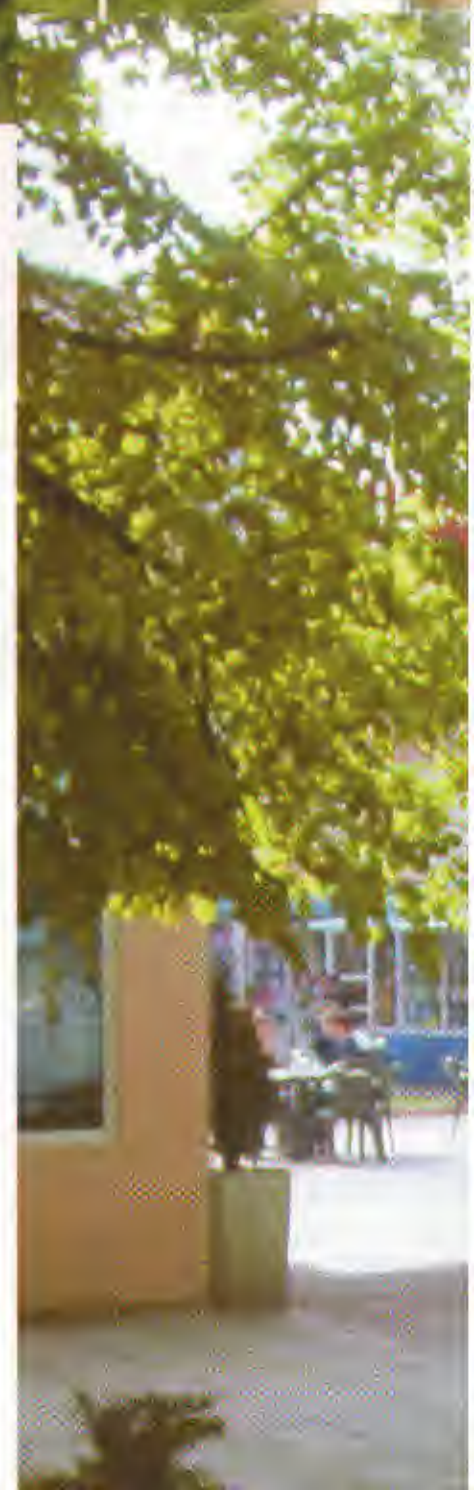
Municipality of Pernik



PERNIK

The town of Pernik is situated in a valley of altitude 700–850 m, surrounded by three mountains: Vitosha to the east, Lyulin to the northeast, and Golo Bardo to the south. The earliest settlement sprang up near the source of Struma river. In ancient times here passed one of the oldest roads on the Balkan Peninsula called Via Strimon, which is the shortest way from the Danube to the Aegean Sea, connecting Europe with the Aegean world and Asia Minor. The history of Pernik is closely linked with this road.

The millennia have left rich evidence of the cultural-historical development of these parts. Many of the archaeological sights and cult buildings in the territory of Pernik and its surroundings, such as the Thracian sanctuary in Tsarkva quarter, the ruins of the Thracian and the medieval fortress on Krakra hill, St. George and St. Nicholas churches in the village of Studena, are monuments of culture of national significance.









In Pernik FOR THE FIRST TIME IN BULGARIA

- In 1899 was built the first electric power station
- The first electric street-lighting from the Mine direction to the Engineer quarter was made
- The first Bulgarian glass was manufactured
- In 1924 was opened the first machine-building factory
- In 1934 was created the first briquette factory
- In 1951 *Republica* thermoelectric power station was opened
- Only in Pernik special steel profiles, ferromagnetes and pectin were produced

PREHISTORIC PERIOD



Idol head, Stone-copper Age, 5th millennium BC, Krakra hill, Pernik

The favourable geographic and climatic conditions in the Pernik valley attracted people since antique times, the river Struma and the convenient passages provided links with near and far away lands. Settlements from the Neolithic and the Stone-copper Ages have been found in the town quarter Iztok, on Krakra hill, in the villages of Divotino, Meshtitsa, Rasnik and Batanovtsi, as well as in the town centre.

Pernik valley was populated in the beginning of the 6th millennium BC by some of the oldest farmers on the continent. Archaeological excavations of the Neolithic settlement under the hockey rink in Iztok quarter revealed a hitherto unknown pre-historic culture. This started the richest collection of early-Neolithic pottery in the Central Balkans, kept at the Pernik Museum of History.

Earthenware accompanied man throughout his settled life. It is one of the marks of the first and deepest social change – the Neolithic revolution – the transition from exploitative to producing economy, which started in the 10th millennium BC in Asia Minor and the Middle East and in the 7th millennium on the Balkans.



Stone and flint tools, 6th millennium BC, Pernik



Ceramic vessel, 4th millennium BC, village of Galabnik

Ceramics is the first artificial material and as such it retained for a long time the significance of something magic and supernatural. Carefully made and exquisite, the pottery reflected the joy of life of the first farmers. The vessels decoration is symbolic, related mainly to fertility. Figures of the Goddess Mother, altars and other cult objects were also made of clay.

In their domestic life people used smoothed stone, flint, bone and horn.

Their dwellings were wattle and daub structures where there was an arched furnace, a grinder, grain-store and bedroom.

The settlements were planned and long-lived.

The high culture of the ancient people in these parts gave impetus to the neolithization of the lands to the north and west.



Objects from the Stone-copper Age, 5th millennium BC, Pernik



Ceramic vessel from the Early Bronze Age, the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC, Pernik



*Clay figure of a ram's head, **Roman period**,
village of Bosnek*



*Clay altar with a human figure, **Roman period***

THRACIAN ANTIQUITY

The oldest historical sources about the district are records concerning the Thracians. In the 6th–4th c. BC, when the Thracian tribe Agrians lived along the lower course of the river Struma, the Thracian settlement in the area of present-day Pernik was protected by a strong fortified wall, built of large ashlar blocks, surrounding an area of 35 decares. The antique coins and pottery of the same period found in excavations show that the settlement communicated with the whole antique world on the Balkan Peninsula and outside it. The direct communications down the river Struma provided it contacts with the cultural centers of ancient Macedonia and the Greek towns in the Aegean. These links had an impact on the architecture and town-planning of the antique settlement at Pernik: fortified walls, solid and spacious houses, farm buildings and cult buildings.



*Votive tablets
of the Thracian horseman*





*Votive tablets
of the Thracian horseman*





General view of the Thracian sanctuary



The temple of the Thracian sanctuary with sacrificial stones in front of it

THE THRACIAN SANCTUARY IN TSARKVA QUARTER

It is in the eastern part of the town, on the left side of the road Pernik–Sofia. It was explored in the 1970s and exhibited as an open-air museum. According to the archaeological finds, the sanctuary dates from the end of 2nd c. to mid-4th c.

Its architecture – a small temple and a monumental sacrificial altar in a rectangular courtyard of dimensions 24 x 28 m, surrounded by a stone wall – makes it one of the most remarkable unique monuments of Thracian material and spiritual culture. During archaeological excavations of this sanctuary, many exquisite marble votive tablets of the Madara Horseman and other Thracian deities, sculptures of the gods of healing Asclepius and Higia, and a dedicatory inscription to Asclepius were found.

The worship of the gods of healing, the use of the mineral water for curative purposes, the offering of gifts to the Thracian gods, have left traces in the local traditional culture, in legends about the sanctity of the place and the healing power of the water.

THE THRACIAN SANCTUARY AND FORTRESS NEAR THE VILLAGE OF BOSNEK

In the vicinity of the village of Bosnek, situated at the foot of the Vitosha Mountain at a distance of 26 km from Pernik, there are remains of Thracian antiquity found mostly during mine development. There is a Thracian fortress with 1.5 to 2 meter-thick walls built of crushed stone. Inside there is a Thracian sanctuary related to the ancient Sun cult.

THE MEDIEVAL FORTRESS KRAKRA

The fortress is situated on a small rock plateau in the southwestern part of Pernik. It was located on the route from Seres, through Rupel down to Melnik, Velbadj, Pernik, Boyana, Sredets and present-day Lom. One of the purposes of the fortress was to protect the avenues of approach to Sredets. The fortress location was strategic.

During the Roman and early Byzantine period ore deposits were exploited near the flanks of Vitosha Mountain. On the northern side of the hill a collective find of tools and household objects dating back to the 4th–6th c. was uncovered. Apart from farm implements and carpenter's tools the find includes objects related to mining and metallurgy. The processing of non-ferrous metals and bronze casting occupied an important place in the life of the local population. The

large number of Roman and Byzantine coins testify to the active trade contacts of the settlement on Krakra hill in the late antiquity and early Middle Ages.

Around the middle of 6th c. AD the antique city there declined after the blows it suffered from a number of invasions, and later by the Slavs and the proto-Bulgarians. Life on the hill continued during the First Bulgarian State. On the ruins of the Thracian fortification the Bulgarians built double walls, reinforced with three rectangular turrets. The fortified walls encircled a much larger area than the antique settlement – about 60 decares.

In the eastern part of the settlement, on the ruins of a pagan sanctuary a large Episcopal basilica was built in the first half of 5th c. On the northern hillside, outside the walls another Christian church was built.

Foundations of a three-nave basilica from 11th–12th c.





Part of the fortified wall surrounding the medieval settlement on Krakra hill





With the arrival of the Slavs and the proto-Bulgarians a new period in the town history began. The presence of the Slavs explains the name of the town, which some scholars attribute to the Slav god Perun. The settlement is believed to have been originally called Perunik, later transformed into Peringrad. Archaeological investigations prove beyond dispute the significant role of the settlement in the Middle Ages.

Chronologically, life of medieval Pernik is divided

in two main historical periods: first, from 8th c. to the beginning of 11th c.; and second – from 11th c. to 12th c. When in the early 9th c., during the rule of the Bulgarian Khans Krum and Omurtag, Serdika came within the boundaries of the Bulgarian state, Pernik acquired strategic importance and was again fortified and surrounded by stone walls and turrets. Thus the town became a military and administrative center of the whole district.

Owing to the importance of the Pernik fortress, the



central power appointed for its governors dignitaries from an old Bulgarian family. These Bulgarian voivodes, district governors in the western Bulgarian lands, were semi-sovereign rulers with their own fortresses and troops. One of them in 11th c. was Krakra of Pernik. He even ventured his own military operations against the Byzantine Empire.

Byzantine chronicles of the time contain information about the Voivode Krakra, eminent boyar and ruler of the town in the time of the Bulgarian Tsar

Samuil. These sources describe Krakra as a pious and honest man, who did not take or tolerate bribes and excelled in warfare. "He did not yield to flattery, or promises or suggestions of any kind," the Byzantine chroniclers wrote.

The Voivode Krakra ruled over 35 other fortresses in the district.

Pernik fortress became famous when at the turn of the 11th c. the theater of war between Bulgaria and Byzantium shifted to the western Bulgarian lands and Sredets was the target of several attacks by the troops of Emperor Basilus II.

The Byzantine chronicler Skilitza described in detail the heroic struggle of the Bulgarians against the invaders during the two sieges of Pernik fortress by Basilus II – in 1004 and 1016. Both attempts of the Byzantine Emperor to take over the fortress failed. It is known that the mediaeval fortress on Krakra hill put up the greatest resistance to the Byzantine expansion and was the last to fall.

After the death of the Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Vladislav in 1018, the Bulgarian state lost the hard battle with Byzantium. Pernik, together with the fortresses on Lyulin, Vitosha and Golo Bardo mountains down to Ruen and Osogovo, which formed the Upper Struma fortification system, fell under Byzantine rule.

Later, in 1189 the town was mentioned by the crusaders of Friedrich II Barbarosa as an inaccessible fortress. After it was burnt down yet another time, the fame of Pernik fortress gradually declined. We learn about the dramatic events in those times from the chronicles of Skilitza-Kedrin and Joan Zonara. They recorded that as soon as he found out about the death of the Bulgarian tsar, Basilus II launched a new campaign against the Bulgarians. When he reached Edirne, the Emperor was met by the brother and son of the famous Krakra. They offered him a deal about the fate of Pernik fortress and other 35 fortresses. Then, according to the Byzantine chroniclers, the Emperor awarded Krakra with the dignity of patrician.

Thus the medieval Pernik was not destroyed as many other Bulgarian fortresses were and during Byzantine domination it retained its strategic role.

Archaeological finds testify to the fact that the fortress continued to be a place of importance during the 11th–12th c. Particularly indicative are the lead seals from the correspondence of the fortress governors with the capital of Byzantium Constantinople. The seal of Emperor Nikiphor III Votaniat (1078–1081) found here, as well as seals of his kinsmen give grounds to believe that during the second half of





11th c. Pernik was governed by a relative of theirs.

During the second half of 11th c. the population of the medieval town suffered a great disaster. In 1063 the town was destroyed by an earthquake with epicenter in Macedonia, described by Michael Ataliat and Joan Zonara. Because of the importance of the town, its fortified walls were quickly reconstructed and it restored its defensive power. In 1190, taking advantage of the unstable situation in Byzantium and the 3rd crusade, the Serbian great province governor Stefan Neman attacked and destroyed many towns in the western Bulgarian lands, including Pernik. The population left the town and the fortress was completely ruined.

But the settlement of Pernik did not die. It moved to the foothill of the Golo Bardo Mountain by the river

Struma. There the inhabitants of the new settlement in the locality of Grado kept for centuries on end the memory of the glorious Krakra voivode and told legends about his exploits.

Apart from being a strategic stronghold, the town on Krakra hill left another trace in the Bulgarian medieval history. Throughout the Middle Ages it was a spiritual center of the district. Chronicles from that time mention many churches in the town and its environs. The results of archaeological excavations confirm these records. In the territory of the fortress several Christian churches were found dating from the 10th–13th c. built in different architectural styles. Noteworthy among them is a two-storey church-tomb from 11th c. which experts set as the earliest of its kind in the Christian world.

As a cult center, the medieval town of Pernik belonged to the so-called Little Holy Mount at the foot of Vitosha and Lyulin mountains. In old Bulgarian written sources the name Pernik appears for the first time in the apocryphal annals "Vision of Prophet Daniel of the kings in the last days of the end of the world", written in the second half of 11th c. The author predicts the rebellion of Peter and Delyan. The name of the fortress is also mentioned in one of the popular life stories of St. John of Rila, written before the saint's relics were transported to Hungary in 1183, which gives grounds to date it to the mid-12th c. It says that St. John of Rila, contemporary of Tsar Peter, before going to Vitosha and thence to the Rila

Mountains settled for some time in a rocky place (cave) by the river Struma near Perig (Pernik).

The saint's life recounted by Patriarch Evtimiy mentions that the Bulgarian Tsar Peter made an attempt to meet the famous saint in the Rila Mountains. Presumably, on this trip to St. John of Rila Tsar Peter stopped at the Pernik fortress. Excavations in the fortress uncovered a unique seal of Tsar Peter, which is the only silver seal of a ruler of this period found so far. According to the practice in those times, it was affixed to some very important document – a royal diploma or some other royal document related to the history of the medieval town of Pernik, or perhaps to the life and work of St. John of Rila.

The gate of the medieval fortress on Krakra hill



CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES IN PERNIK MUNICIPALITY

Within the boundaries of Pernik municipality today fall 4 monasteries and 16 churches. They are remarkable monuments of the Bulgarian Christian tradition. Many of them keep old icons, others were painted by famous iconographers of the Samokov Art School, while still others preserve in their walls antique and

medieval inscriptions from older buildings – evidence of the continuity of settled life in the area.

According to the passion of St. John of Rila, in a certain period of his life the saint lived in a cave by the river Struma near present-day Pernik.

ST. JOHN OF RILA CHURCH IN PERNIK

It is in the town center. It was built in 1919, on the initiative of Ivan Simeonov, Director of Pernik State Mines, and consecrated by Bishop Varlaam on October 19, 1920. The church bears the name of the Bulgarian saint St. John of Rila.

In 1930, the managing board of Pernik Mines decided the Bulgarian saint St. John of Rila to be honoured as protector of the miners. The reason for this was an information from the saint's life that he spent a large part of his life fasting and praying in a cave in the rocks. Later the saint's day became the Day of Pernik.

St. John of Rila Church was painted by the eminent Bulgarian artists Dechko Uzunov, Nikola Marinov and Alexander Poplilov. Above its entrance is the unique colour mosaic of St. John of Rila.



ST. ELIJA THE PROPHET CHURCH





The church is in Iztok quarter of the town of Pernik. It was built in 1918 by the inhabitants of the former village of Moshino, now part of the town. St. Elija Church, which is considered to be the largest temple in Southwestern Bulgaria, was erected in the place of the old church of Moshino. The people have a legend about its construction, which cost great efforts and cunning before the authorities as in that time Christians in the Ottoman Empire were not

allowed to build new churches.

In 1970, the church fell in the grounds of the steel plant to be constructed there and was abandoned. Seventeen years later, in 1997 the inhabitants of Iztok quarter, with the help of the town council, set up an initiative committee for restoration of the church. In only a couple of years the required funds were raised by donations and the splendour of St. Elija the Prophet Church of Moshino was restored.



THE ASSUMPTION CHURCH

It is in the eastern part of Iztok quarter of Pernik. It was built in the 1950s by the inhabitants of the new quarter, who came from the villages of Krapets and Popovo which had to be demolished for the construction of a dam lake in 1950. They were given land

plots in the present-day Iztok quarter. Together with their new homes they constructed their own church, where they took some of the icons and church plate of their village churches.

ST. GEORGE CHURCH NEAR THE VILLAGE OF STUDENA

It is on a small hill near the village. The church was built in 14th c. It has rectangular foundations and a cross-like apse and is dug in a few feet in the ground. Its murals are of 16th c. On both sides of the entrance marble fragments of older structures are built in. In front of it a Roman capital is displayed.





Part of the fortified wall of the medieval village on Krakra hill







The church was built in mid-19th c. and icon-painted around 1870. Outstanding among its murals is the figure of the Bulgarian St. Petka. In the center of the floor lies a large stone slab with a depiction of a two-headed eagle and severely damaged inscriptions. There are plaques with Christian symbols on the façade and on the external walls.

ST. ARCHANGEL MICHAEL CHURCH IN THE VILLAGE OF STUDENA



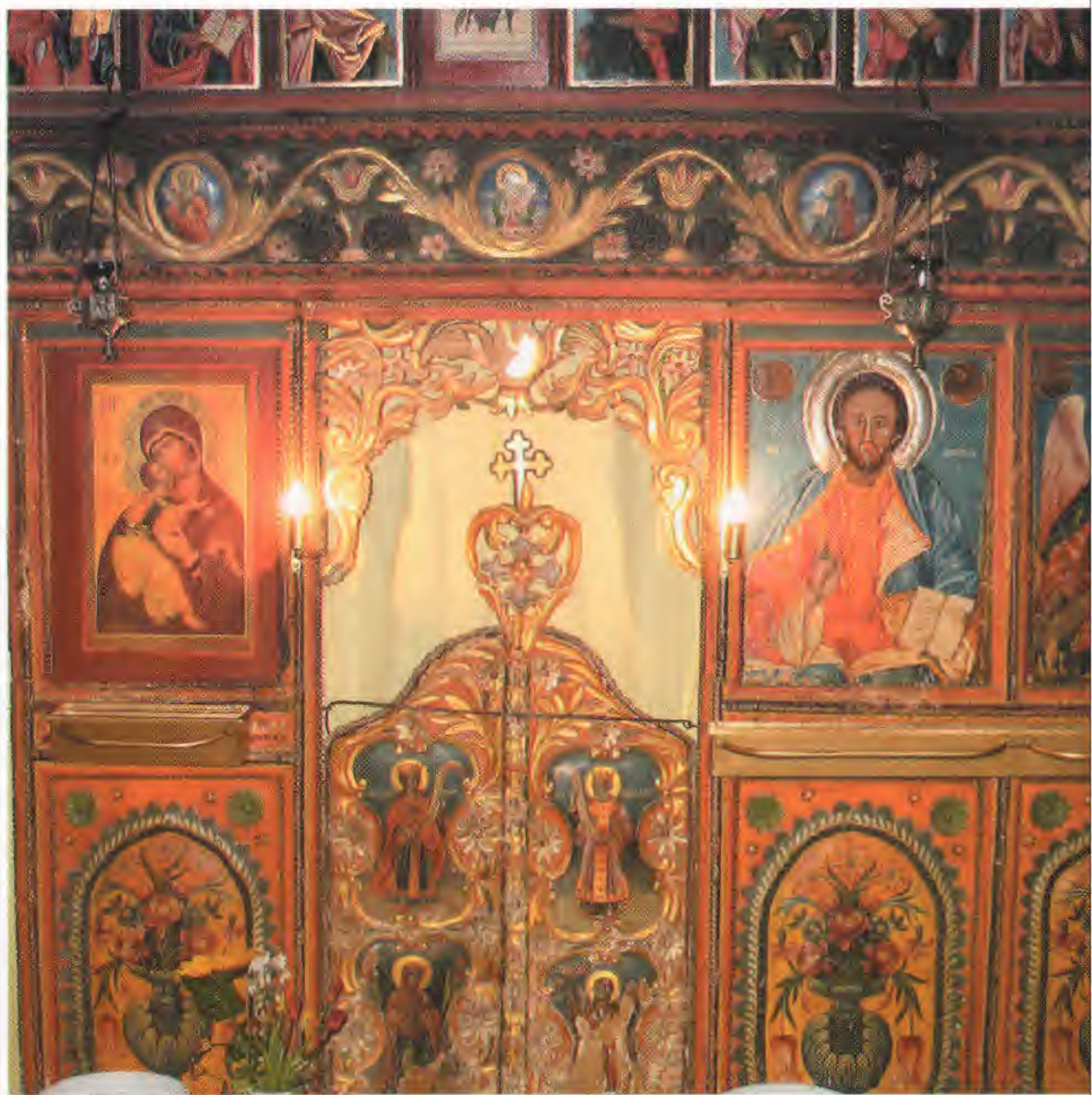


ST. NICHOLAS OF MIRLIKIA MONASTERY NEAR THE VILLAGE OF Kladnitsa

It is located on the southern slopes of Vitosha Mountain to the east of Kladnitsa and is also known as Kladnitsa Monastery. It was built in the middle of 13th c. but during the Ottoman invasion it was burned down and destroyed. In 1841 the Bulgarian patriot Spas Burnov from the village of Marchaevo restored with his own money the church of Kladnitsa Monastery on the old foundations. The master-builders Bone and Mihal from the village of Zhableno worked on the reconstruction. The murals were painted in 1883 by the icon-painter Kosta Antikarov from Samokov. The church-donor Spas Burnov was killed in the church one year after its consecration at the order of Sofia's pasha who had refused permission for the church construction. Until mid-19th c. the present-day monastery building next to the church was at a little higher place, where the ruins of Kladnitsa fortress, 5th-6th c., can be seen. Construction works uncovered the foundations of a three-nave cult building.

Soon after the reconstruction of St. Nicholas Monastery a monastery school was opened in it. The three priests Nikola, Yanaki and Pavel taught there and the students were children from Kladnitsa and the neighbouring villages. In 1929, the management of Perkin Mines granted land to the monastery and built a children's camp next to it.





HOLY TRINITY MONASTERY NEAR THE VILLAGE OF DIVOTINO

The Holy Trinity Monastery of Divotino is situated among a wonderful landscape. According to legends preserved by the local population, the monastery was built in 10th c. by the Bulgarian Tsar Peter. Documents

show that in 1810 a monastery school was opened there for the children from Divotino and the neighbouring villages.

ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH IN THE VILLAGE OF RASNIK

The church was built in mid-19th c. It was painted in 1868 by the artist Georgi Hristov from Samokov. The church-donors are depicted as two men wearing hats resembling the Muslim turbans, which the local population associates with an interesting legend from the time of the Ottoman domination.







ST. THEODORE STRATILAT CHURCH IN THE VILLAGE OF BOSNEK

The church is in the village centre and was built in 1866. Later a narthex was added to it. It was painted by a Samokov icon-painter.

ST. PETKA CHURCH IN THE VILLAGE OF CHUYPETLYOVO

The church was built in 1860. It is constructed on the model of Hreljo's Tower in Rila Monastery.

THE MINE AND THE TOWN



Humni Dol gallery, 1906

In 1891 the Bulgarian state started exploiting the rich coal-fields in the area of the not very populous village of Pernik. As a result of the quick expansion of the mine and its growing production, the number of inhabitants grew and hence the need of cultural activities and institutes, supported by the mine. In 1901 for example the first civil brass band was set up with Pernik Mines, and in 1919, before the settlement had acquired the status of a town, the beginnings of a professional theater were laid.

A circle of satellite settlements formed around Pernik, providing workers for the mine. After the First World War, new technologies were introduced in the mine and higher rates of production were achieved, so the management had to recruit workers from the region.

An important stage in the development of the mine company, known as Pernik Mines, was its status of autonomous enterprise obtained in 1925. This enabled new procedures of economic and social significance, such as percentage of the profit to be distributed among the workers. The record of funds distribution in mid-1920s gives a fair idea of the mine's contribution to the cultural development of the town. For example, 3% of the funds were allocated for the support of the mining school, specialization trips, prizes for literary works on mining in Bulgaria, awards for

inventions in the field of mining machines and equipment, etc. Another 2.5% constituted a fund for the cultural, social and health needs of the mine workers.

In the next few years, as a result of the restructuring of production, the concentration of capital and workforce, Pernik Mines turned into an industrial complex of a new type. It comprised all mine basins property of the Bulgarian state. The final result of this process was that in 1934 the autonomous enterprise became chief manager of all state-owned mines of diverse mineral resources.

On the eve of the Second World War, the company accounted for 87% of the coal production and 83% of the total mining output in the country.

At that time Pernik experienced the largest population growth in terms of percentage on a national scale. The expansion of the mine basin and the development of the mining industry led to the construction of a miners' town – prototype of the present-day town of Pernik.

In the beginning of 20th c. the company started buying new land plots for the construction of the first production and administrative buildings. Within a short period of time, the production space of the coal-mining basin outside the village was transformed into a

Gallery props, early 20th c.





Dwellings of clerks and employees of Pernik Mines, 1917

modern industrial enterprise with a testing laboratory, technical services, workshops, power generation, a road network, etc.

A little later, when the street network was completed, construction of many new buildings started. New residential districts were created, such as the Engineers' quarter, the Workmen's dwellings, new public buildings and utilities: polyclinics, hospital, theater, cinema, cultural club, park, etc.



The first power plant in Pernik Mines, 1917

In 1926 the settlement had 12,300 inhabitants, of whom 6100 worked in the mines. In the early years a number of foreign engineers and technicians settled here, mainly Germans and Czechs. Later many Bulgarian mining engineers, who had studied in Belgium, France and Germany, were drawn in, as well as highly qualified specialists in medicine, education and administration.

The governing body of Pernik Mines implemented a long-term program for housing construction for the people employed in all spheres of the mining industry, as a result of which the settlement grew and developed.

In 1929, by decree of Tsar Boris III, the village of Pernik was promulgated a town. The center of the then miners' village is the present-day centrum of the town with the Mines Directorate, the mine church St. John of Rila, and the Monument to the Miner.

A special service was set up at the mining enterprise with three divisions: Public Utilities, Construction and Maintenance of Buildings, and Parks and Gardens. The large-scale construction by Pernik Mines was combined with a social program, including the building of a polyclinic, hospital, two schools at different levels of education, kindergarten, church, theater, stadium, and a rehabilitation zone outside the town near the mineral spring in Rudartsi.

The management of the autonomous enterprise organized multiform social and cultural activities and supported the specialists needed for that. Many civil organizations were founded in Pernik, such as the Technicians' Society founded in 1912 with 45 members, Engineering and Architecture Society founded in 1925 with 35 regular members, Neutral Professional Society of Mechanics founded in 1920 with 120 members, the Pernik branch of Sofia Teachers' Society with the Bulgarian Teachers' Union founded in 1925 with 75 members, etc.

In the course of half a century, from the end of 19th c. to the mid-20th c. the development of the town of Pernik and its life were entirely formed by and in connection with Pernik Mines. The mines produced the town development and created the town space and its socialization.

In the 1950s the process of drawing in workers for the rapidly progressing metallurgy and machine-



Pernik Railway Station, 1917

building again grew apace, which caused a new boom of the town population. The new strategy for development of Pernik and the region complied with the industries developed there. Pernik became a large center of the Bulgarian metallurgy and machine-building. On the basis of its industries Pernik established contacts with all parts of the world. Specialists from Czechia, Russia, Germany, Poland, Austria and Japan worked in the mines and the industrial plants of Pernik. In these years a good base was built for cul-

ture, sports, tourism, education and healthcare and Pernik acquired the visage of a modern European town.

Pernik municipality, as an administrative-territorial entity, comprises 24 settlements, of which two towns and twenty two villages, and occupies an area of 461 sq km. The population of the municipality as of February 3, 2004, is 110,764 inhabitants, of whom 93,824 live in the town of Pernik.

From 1959 to 1987 Pernik was a district center, and since

1999 it is a regional center.

Today, the town of Pernik reassesses its future development on the basis of its industrial heritage, which is being restructured and reformed. The new role of Pernik Mines is inscribed in it. The Mines retain their significance with the symbols of the already traditional fest calendar of the town, the architectural landmarks and buildings which have been turned into unique cultural monuments.

Celebrations of the promulgation of Pernik a town, 1929

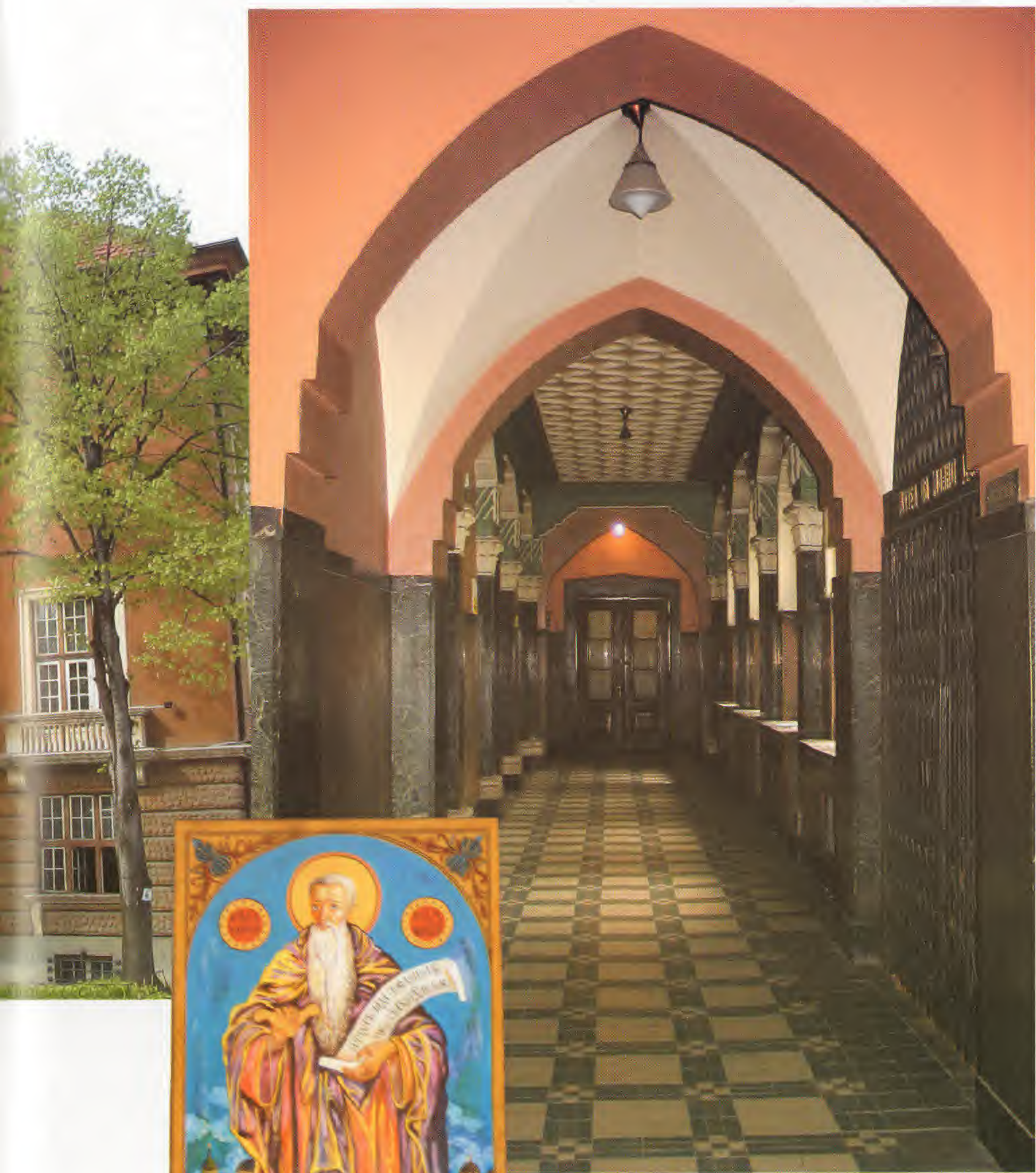




THE MINES DIRECTORATE

The building, which housed the mines administration, is a remarkable architectural monument of culture and preserves unique works of art. It is one of the town symbols. Built in 1932 after the design of architects Kosta Nikolov and Ilia Popov. Its façade is in neoclassical style. Vratsa stone was used for its construction. The interior is arranged entirely in gothic style. The main lobby and the monumental staircase

are lined with Italian marble and polished granite, while the corridors are faced with Czech decorative faience. The building offers ample opportunity for cultural activities: a hall with good acoustics for concerts, conference room, spacious courtyards. The turret has a Brege clock, connected to the mechanisms of 30 smaller clocks in the building.



St. John of Rila, protector of the miners

MUSEUM OF MINING

The Museum of Mining in Pernik, which is unique on the Balkan Peninsula, is a complex of an over-ground and an underground part. The over-ground part of the museum occupies the central section of the ground floor of the Mines Directorate. Several rooms show the rich museum exposition, tracing the development of mining in its different periods, and the geologic history and diversity of Pernik district. Boards and showcases display documents, mining exhibits and scale-models, showing the origin and development of the state mine, and hence of the town. The architectural and spatial design of the mining museum takes into account the original structure of the hall and the beautiful building of the Mines Directorate, an original monument of Bulgarian mining in its own right.

In area, space, number of exhibits and their arrangement in authentic underground mine galleries in Europe only the museum in Bochum, Germany rivals the Pernik Museum of Mining.



The first working clothes of Pernik miners





Mine rescue service



*Airplane propeller of the royal escadrille
presented by Tsar Boris III*



Souvenirs from related enterprises in Europe



*Workers banners of
honour*



"The Town of Black Gold",
song by the Russian composer Vladimir Kamolikov



*Golden Order of Labour
for high achievements*



Miners' Spartakiad



Sculpture composition of Pernik miners

International awards for Pernik coal

MINE GALLERY EXPOSITION

The underground part of the museum is located in the main galleries of the old mines, where on August 17, 1881, the first sod of the first coal mine in Bulgaria was turned. Visitors can go a distance of 250 m inside the mine, descending 50 m deep in the ground. By displaying the exposition in the reconstructed oldest galleries in the central part of town, the Mines have set up a unique museum exposition for Bulgaria, "Mine Gallery". With its many original exhibits in real underground environment it presents chronologically the beginnings and development of coal mining machinery. It is interesting to see also the techniques for coal transportation in the different periods, starting from the wooden wheelbarrows of 1895, horse-drawn transport for which a horse stable was set up, the electric facilities introduced in 1931.

A series of collections were published with materials on the development of mining in Bulgaria and the history of Pernik and the region.



Horse-drawn wagon



MUSEUM OF HISTORY

It was founded in 1953 as a town museum of history by a resolution of the Town People's Council of Pernik. In 1959 it grew into District Museum of History. After years of research and collecting, in 1973 the permanent expositions of the departments of Archaeology, Ethnography and New History were opened for visitors. Today it has a basic fund of 17,408 museum exhibits, and a supporting fund of 37,891 exhibits. In the course of over 40 years, con-

sistent archaeological excavations organized by the museum are carried out in the territory of Pernik district. As a result of the excavations, collecting and donations, today the Pernik Museum of History has several rich and well-structured collections: Prehistoric Pottery, Busintsi Pottery, Textiles from Mid-Western Bulgaria, 18th–19th c. Icons, Numismatic Collection, Photo Fund, reflecting the lifestyle, culture and political life of Pernik district during 19th–20th c.



*Ceramic vessel of 10th c.
with a proto-Bulgarian sign*



Medieval mining tools



*Medieval helmet and chain
armor remnants*



Silver seal of Tsar Peter (927-969)



*Iron sword and arrow and spear gads
from the medieval fortress on
Krakra hill*





*Traditional women's dress from Pernik district,
the turn of 20th c.*



*Ceramic device for
brewing brandy,
the turn of 20th c.*

BUSINTSI POTTERY

Back in 18th–19th c. pottery was well developed in the village of Busintsi rooted in an old tradition. The skillfully coloured and richly ornamented earthenware made by the Busintsi masters combine antique and medieval Bulgarian traditions. In the early 20th c. in every house in Busintsi there was a potter's workshop. Their products sold well in near and distant markets. Today, Busintsi pottery is still valued highly by connoisseurs of folk art.



COMPREHENSIVE CHILDREN'S COMPLEX, PERNIK

Extra-school pedagogical entity, which involves 2300 children from Pernik municipality in diverse cultural, science, amusement, informational, sports and tourism, and applied technical activities. The complex offers a comprehensive program of children's entertainment, contests, shows and exhibitions for the development of the children's interests and talents, all this in a spacious and modernly furnished building. The complex has a rich international activity. Its groups and schools are winners of many international prizes and distinctions.

The complex was founded on January 1, 1953, when a Children's Palace was opened in Pernik, which quickly became a favourite place for all children and adolescents between the age of 5 and 18. On June

18, 1982, it moved in a new building. By an order of the Ministry of Education, from March 1, 2000, the Center for Work with Children, the Students' Sports School, and the Center for Students' Technical and Scientific Creativity were transformed into Comprehensive Children's Complex, Pernik.

The yearly calendar of the Comprehensive Children's Complex today includes over 150 performances in the district, the country and abroad. Particularly active are the sections: Nursery School, Fine Arts School, Rodna Pesen Children's Choir, English Language School, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Graovche Children's and Youths' Folk Ensemble, the sports schools, sport dance club, etc.



NURSERY SCHOOL

In September 1990, on the basis of an analysis of the extensive experience and creative quests of the Children's Center, a team of pedagogues and psychologists launched an enriched program for work with children of pre-school age, related to the overall activity of the center. Parallel to the preparation for school, the program offers introduction to the spheres of fine arts, music, dance and sports. One of the main tasks in working with children is to get an objective idea of the gifts and capabilities of the children with view to marking the prospects for the child's development.



FINE ARTS SCHOOL

It made its first steps in 1952 with the introduction of graphics and woodcarving in the then District Pioneers' Home. The Fine Arts School was officially opened in 1963. Until 1983 it included the genres of graphics, painting, applied arts, ceramics and sculpture, woodcarving and metal plastic. In 1992 textiles and fashion were introduced.

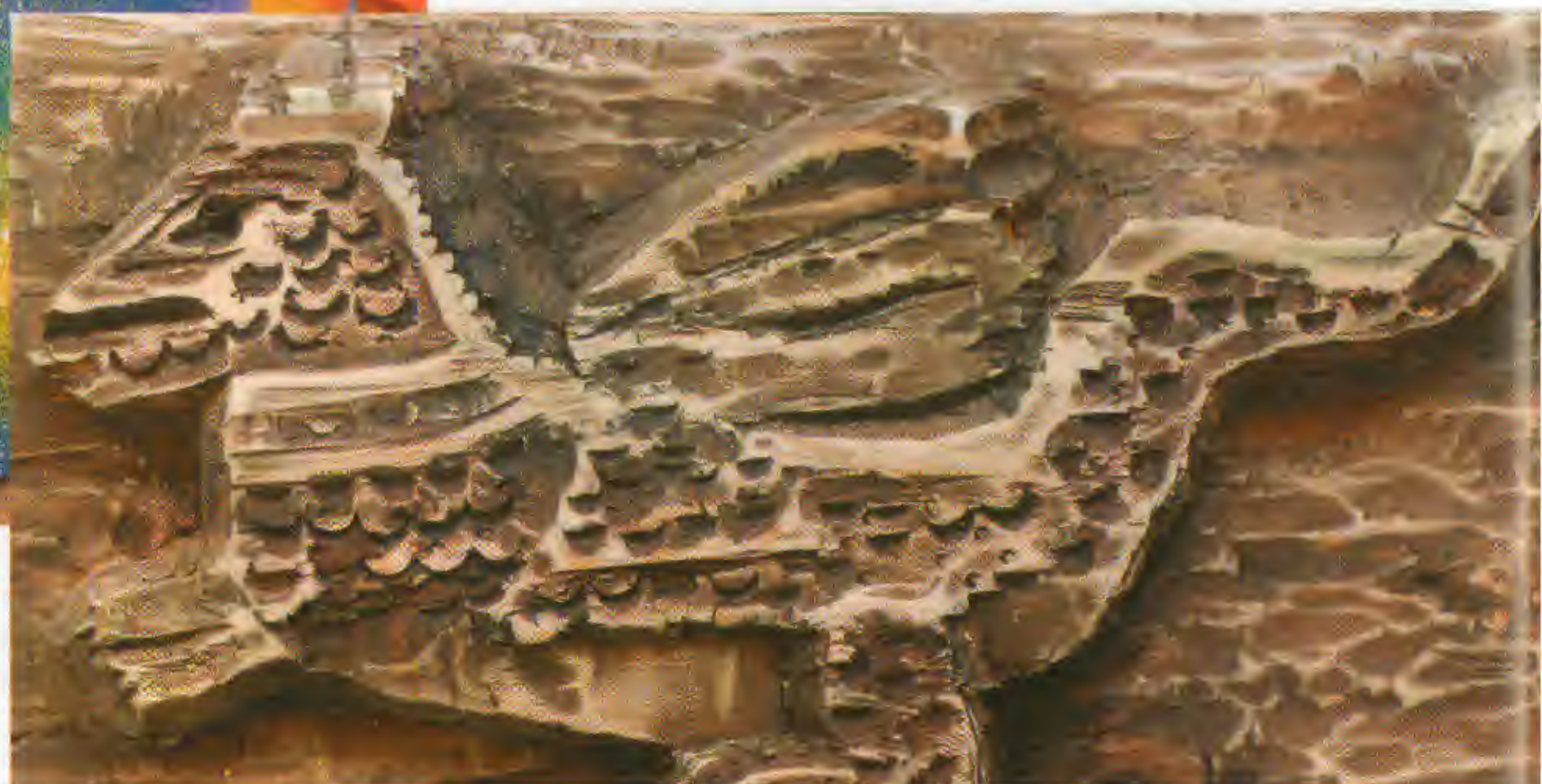
The Fine Arts School in Pernik is one of the oldest and most prestigious schools in Bulgaria, known in the country and abroad. It is winner of diplomas and medals in many national and international contests, such as the Banner of Peace International Assembly, children's fine arts festivals in Sofia, Blagoevgrad, Varna, Shumen, Targovishte, Yambol, Troyan, etc.

Works of its pupils have been awarded gold and silver medals. Many artworks are now in different



countries of the world – Japan, India, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, Poland, Germany, France, Hungary, Macedonia, etc.

In 1988 high results were marked in the work with children and in connection with its 25th anniversary the school was awarded the Order of Cyril and Methodius 2nd class. The same year, the children from the wood-carving section made a panel for the UNICEF Headquarters in New York at the invitation of the organization. The Fine Arts School has granted works to 1300 Years Bulgaria Fund, Slavyani Foundation, St. St. Cyril and Methodius Foundation, many schools, hospitals and cultural institutes.



GRAOVCHE CHILDREN'S AND YOUTHS' FOLK ENSEMBLE

Founded in 1978 with the merge of the Dance Group (founded in 1966), the Folk Songs Choir (founded in 1968) and the Orchestra of Folk Instruments (founded in 1972). Its major goal is to preserve, further and popularize the song, music and dance tradition of the Graovo folklore.

Graovche Ensemble is a laureate of many silver and gold medals in the 3rd–7th National Festivals. In 1984, at the 6th National Festival it won the highest title "Representative Ensemble".

Graovche Ensemble has numerous participations in events abroad: in Czechia Slovakia, Yugoslavia, Ukraine, Russia, France, Poland, Syria, India, Germany, Turkey and Italy, from where it brought back

many awards, for example, gold medal in Cavalcade, Paris, 1979, first prize in the festival in Dera, Syria, 1985, and in Hale, 1989.

Graovche Ensemble made several tours in Turkey: a concert tour in Izmir in 1996; the international folk festival in Antalya October 25–29, 1998, where it won second place and was awarded a cup and silver medal; the international festival in Aydin in April 1999, and in Izmir in 2002.

In September 2000, Graovche Ensemble won first prize at the European Music Festival in Bosel, Germany. In April next year, the ensemble made a successful 14-day tour in Italy. In all these places, Graovche Ensemble with its buoyancy and talent created real celebrations for the spirit, revealing the riches and deep symbolism of the Bulgarian folk dances and costumes, the magic of Bulgarian music and songs.





RODNA PESEN CHILDREN'S CHOIR

It was founded in 1962 and contacted the most famous Bulgarian composers who composed new children songs especially for Rodna Pesen. The choir participated and won prizes and distinctions in the 5th and 6th National Festivals, Panorama of Bulgarian Choir Singing, Festival of New Bulgarian Music, and the May Choir Festival. It has numerous recordings in Radio Sofia and many released records.

The choir made its first performance abroad in 1980 in the town of Cestohova, Poland, followed by a long series of successful tours:

1981 – participation in a choir festival in Olomouc, Czechoslovakia

1982 – 3rd place in the Prato choir contest, Italy

1983 – participation in the Paris Summer Festival

1985 – laureate of the contest in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia

1989 – participation in the festival in Mannheim, Germany

1991 – participation in the choir festival of religious music in Cestohova, Poland

1994 – 2nd prize in the festival in Neerpelt, Belgium

1995 – participation in a choir festival in Hale, Germany

1998 – 1st place and gold medal for choir mastery at an international festival in Balashikha, Moscow District

1999 – 1st prize and laureate title in the choir festival in Preveza, Greece

2001 – 2nd prize in the International choir festival in Hale, Germany

Rodna Pesen Children's Choir collaborates with other choirs in Pernik. Particularly popular are its joint performances with Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.





RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS SCHOOL

Founded in 1956, it has high achievements in sports mastership and stage activity.



SPORT SCHOOLS

The Comprehensive Children's Complex has schools in the sports traditional for Pernik: volleyball, basketball, wrestling, table tennis and track-and-field athletics. In the sports groups over 500 children of different age practice in several main disciplines:

BASKETBALL

The basketball teams are winners of many prizes in municipal and national championships. In 2000 the girls' team placed first in the national students' games in Varna. The teams practice in the halls Minyor, Krakra, and Metalurg, which offer excellent conditions.

VOLLEYBALL

This is the sport which has brought Pernik the greatest national and international fame. Every year

the volleyball players of the Comprehensive Children's Complex participate in the regional competitions for different age groups. The club has very good success at national level, too.

WRESTLING

The Greco-Roman style wrestling team is among the best performing groups. In 2002 the pupils from the Pernik school won four gold and one bronze medals for 5th and 6th grade children, and a gold medal, two silver and one bronze medals for boys in 7th and 8th grade. The Greco-Roman style wrestling school took part in the European championship in Odessa. Every year alumni of the wrestling school at the Comprehensive Children's Complex go to the Sports School and wrestling clubs in Pernik and in other towns in the country.

BALLET STUDIO

The children's ballet school won its greatest popularity with participations in the Bulgarian National Television programs "Golden Cockerel" and "Nosegay of Wild Geranium" and the youth TV show "Like the Lions".



NADEZHDA SPORT DANCE CLUB

Members of the club are children aged between 7 and 20. The club was started in 1994 and is a mem-

ber of the Bulgarian Federation of Sport Dances. The training is under a program of the International Sport Dance Federation. The club regularly participates in national tournaments.



CHILDREN'S AND YOUTHS' THEATER

It was founded in 1963 and in the space of over 20 years it has been successfully staging children's plays. It participated in the International Children's Festival in the Netherlands with *The Unique Little Pearl*.



PALACE OF CULTURE MUNICIPAL COMPLEX

The Palace of Culture in Pernik was inaugurated on February 10, 1957, while its first sod was turned on July 15, 1953. The building was designed by architect Alexander Ivanov Dubovik.

The Palace of Culture is a natural center of rich and diverse activity, successor and continuator of considerable cultural traditions. Today it still participates in the spiritual life of Pernik as a leading cultural institute.

In 1982 the Palace was awarded the Order of Cyril and Methodius 1st class.

A new stage in its development opened in 2000 when administratively and artistically it grew into Municipal Complex Palace of Culture – an institution

creating, popularizing and preserving cultural values.

Guests and interlocutors of the inhabitants of Pernik in the rubric "Autograph for Pernik" have been eminent Bulgarian intellectuals as Nikolay Haitov, Damyan Damyanov, Toncho Zhechev, Anton Donchev, Doncho Tsonchev, Pavel Matev, Lyubomir Levchev, Georgi Konstantinov, Gena Dimitrova, Lyudmila Cheshmedjieva, Toncho Rusev, Bozhidar Dimitrov, Andrey Pantev, Petko Yotov, Elena Yoncheva, Velislava Dareva.

A characteristic activity of the institution is the presentation of books by young Pernik talents and established national authors.





PROFESSIONAL BRASS BAND

In 1902 Pernik Mines founded the first civil brass orchestra in Bulgaria. Czech and Bulgarian bandmasters formed this unique in its time orchestra, which became the foundation of the music tradition of the miners' town. In 1965 the band was transferred to the Palace of Culture.

Typical for the Brass Band repertoire is the genre diversity: on the one hand, it includes classic instrumental pieces by Bulgarian and world composers or arranged folklore and pieces by contemporary Bulgarian composers, and on the other, popular pieces from musicals and operettas, works for mixed choir and brass band, down to modern jazz and rock music.

The band is winner of the Golden Lyre of the Union of Bulgarian Musicians and Dancers and other national and international distinctions.



ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Founded by Pernik municipality in 1975. Next year, after a successful participation in the Herbert von Karayan international orchestra contest in West Berlin, the band was permanently registered in the music calendar of the town, the region and the country.

Its repertory, which is continuously enriched, comprises nearly all important works for this kind of orchestra from the time of the baroque to the present-day.

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra is a partner of many

famous Bulgarian soloists and traditionally supports young talents.

The music public in the country and abroad perceive spontaneously the style of Orpheus with its vitality, timbre orchestra sound, wonderful ensemble, and intriguing concert programs.

This artistic style took the band to many international music festivals in Bulgaria (Sofia Music Weeks, Arts Salon, Chamber Festival in Plovdiv) and Europe (Germany, Poland, Norway, Wales, the Netherlands, Russia and Czechia).



FOLK ORCHESTRA

It exists since 1959. The orchestra is formed of the typical Bulgarian folklore instruments: kaval, bag-pipe, rebec, mandolin, drum. The great Bulgarian masters Tsvetko Blagoev (kaval) and Atanas Valchev (rebec) have played in the orchestra.

The varied repertory, characteristic sound and Graovo interpretations give the orchestra a specific image.

It has had many performances on the stages in the region, the country and abroad. It is winner of prestigious awards from national and international festivals.



GRAOVO YOUTH FOLK SONG AND DANCE ENSEMBLE

The Ensemble was founded in 1959. It has participated in national and international festivals. Multiple winner of gold and silver medals in national festivals of amateur art activities, and first prizes in world contests and festivals. It has given concerts in Italy, France, Hungary, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Yugoslavia, Russia, Turkey and Canada. In Portugal the Ensemble was awarded Diploma of Honour and gold medal.

The program of the Ensemble is diverse and includes songs and dances from different ethno-

graphic regions, the lively songs and ring-dances from the Shoppe region occupying a major place.

The extraordinary variety of Bulgarian folk rhythms, the captivating performances, the colourful costumes, and wide range of the original voices make the ensemble very attractive.

In 1995 the ensemble set up a Children's and Youths' Folk Song and Dance Ensemble with choreographer Todor Todorov, which has 80 members. In 1996 it won Second Prize in the Podmoskovnie Vechera International Folk Festival in Elektrostal, Russia. In 1999 it won First Prize at the International Children's Folk Festival in Iskenderun, Turkey.



COLLEGIUM CANTICUM MIXED CHOIR

The choir was founded in 1987 and brought together young people of different walks of life and social status. They give the best of their artistic powers to achieve exquisite beauty in the vocal-ensemble music. The choir repertoire includes works of different authors and epochs, priority being given to church-Slavonic chants and arrangements of Bulgarian folk songs. Due place has been given to world music: madrigals, pieces in classical and romantic style, works by contemporary composers, choir works, musicals, etc.

The choir is multiple gold medal winner in national festivals of amateur art activities. It won the Big Prize at the Third International Choir Festival in Levadhia, Greece. Winner of second prize in the International Choir Contest in Bad Ischl, Austria, 1996, and many other. Since 1996 the choir is a member of Europa Cantat.



SVETOSLAV MINKOV UNIVERSAL SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY

This is the largest documentary depository, main reference and information center in the region.

The library fund contains about 280,000 items.

The Universal Scientific Library was founded as a city library in 1955. Its true activity began with its relocation to the Palace of Culture in 1957. In 1983 it was awarded the Order of Cyril and Methodius 1st class and named after the great Bulgarian writer Svetoslav Minkov. The structure of the library was also changed to make it a universal scientific library.



ART GALLERY

Palace of Culture Municipal Complex has three art halls: City Art Gallery, Cultural Information Center Gallery and Art Salon.

The City Art Gallery was founded in 1958. It has a fund of 1682 artworks, including works of the famous Bulgarian artists Zlatyu Boyadjiev, Ilia Petrov, Alexander Poplilov, Svetlin Rusev, Lyuben Gaydarov and Vaska Emanuilova.

Cultural Information Center Gallery exists since 1993. It organizes mainly one-man shows of Pernik artists or guest artists from the country.

Art Salon was founded in 1996. It organizes one-man shows, exhibitions of children from the fine art schools and topical exhibitions.

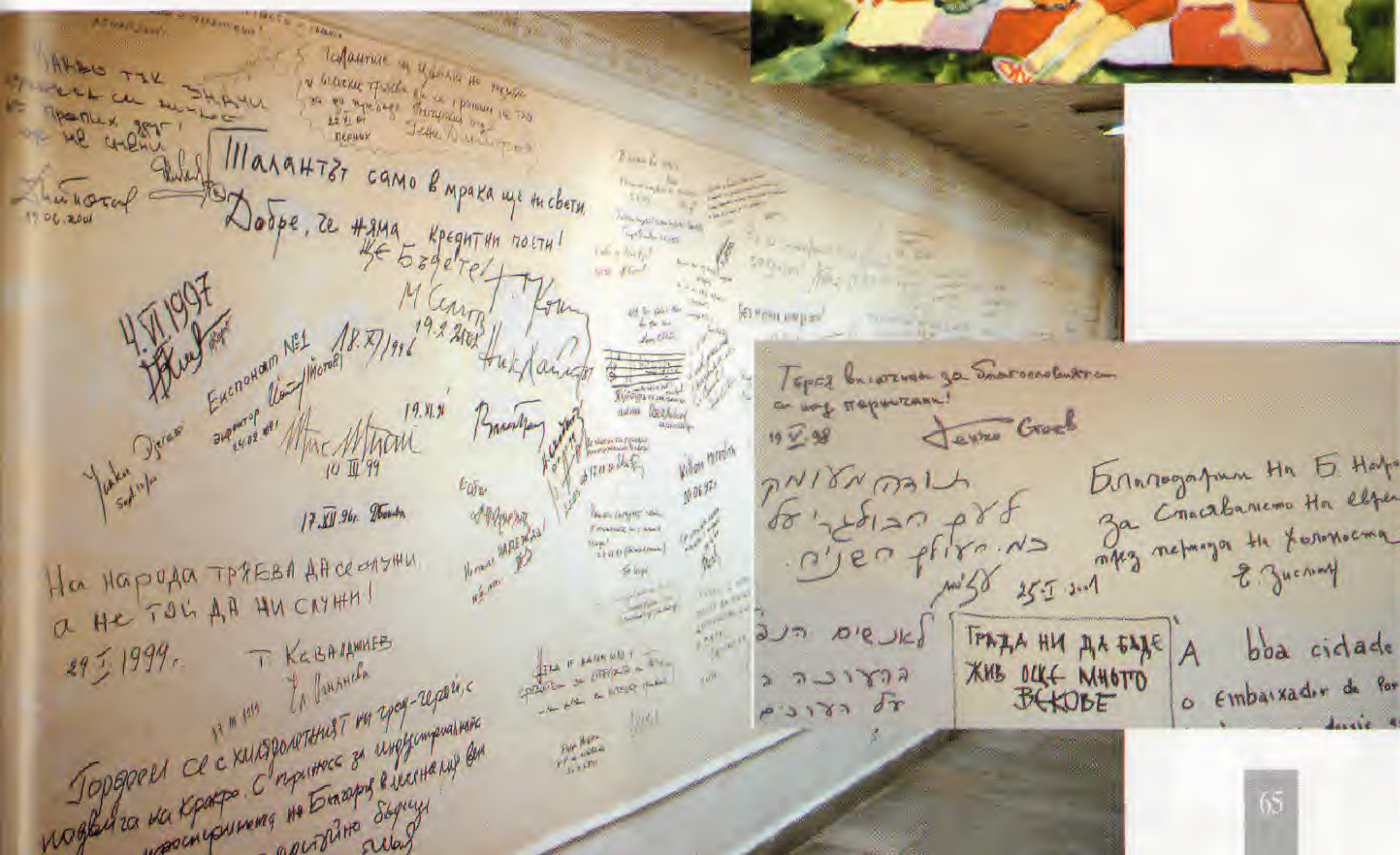




COMPREHENSIVE ART SCHOOL

It functions since 1954 as a music school and in 1996 it became comprehensive with the setting up of the fine arts school.

At present 75 children are taught piano, accordion, violin, guitar, percussion and fine arts. The main objective of the school is to discover young talents and guide them to specialized education in the field of arts.



BOYAN DANOVSKI MUNICIPAL THEATER

It was founded in 1919. In its long years of existence it has invariably sought the most valuable works in world and Bulgarian dramaturgy.

Its history was built by some of the most talented Bulgarian theater-makers.

The Theater is a municipal cultural institute and it

is financed by subsidies from Pernik Municipality, box-office revenues, participation in contests organized by the National Theater Center with the Ministry of Culture, and sponsorship.

The theater has 30 people on the staff, 500-seat hall, sound-recording studio, designer's atelier, etc.

The theater biography contains the names of Leda Taseva, Valcho Kamarashev, Valentin Ganev, Georgi Rusev, Stoyan Gadev, Georgi Gaytanikov, Ilka Zafirova, Lyubomir Bachvarov, Maria Kavardjikova, Peter Slabakov, Peter Vuchkov, etc.

The theater repertory supports 12 productions.

In 2003, Boyan Danovski Municipal Theater staged the show "Krakra" in the homonymous historic locality which has preserved the spirit of the millennial settlement. This year, the unique open-air spectacle will be renewed.

The show is a grandiose attraction with over 60 personages. The production includes the professional theatrical company, amateur ensembles, David horse base, etc.



Krakra show

YOUTH CENTRE, PERNIK

The municipal Youth Center was founded more than 30 years ago. The major aims of the Center are to offer the youths and children organized and useful ways of spending their free time, the aesthetic education of the young people by building in them an attitude to culture, the formation of universal values.

The Centre offers additional out of school activities and is instrumental in discovering young talents and creating conditions for their unfolding. Gifted children can join the various ensembles and schools of the Center.

Bulgarian Rhythms Folk Ensemble has a worthy place in the cultural life of the town, in the regional holidays and celebrations, and in the annual editions of Chicho Stoyan children's holiday, Banner of Peace Children's Assembly. The ensemble has taken part in folk festivals in Turkey, Greece, Russia, Macedonia.





The majorette ensemble members are in two age groups – preparatory and concert. Modern choreography and love for the stage are the driving force of the ensemble. It has many participations in celebrations of all the town.

Slantse Art and Batik School improves the aesthetic criteria of the young artists and keeps up their striving for beauty and creativity.

With its summer activities, the Youth Center enables young people to choose the best forms for realization of their talents. Every autumn the Youth Center hospitably opens its doors to welcome parents and studious children and answer their dreams and wishes.

The Youth Center is an active partner of the schools in Pernik. It enhances extra-school work by organizing lectures and discussions on the issues of sex education, drug addiction, domestic and other violence, patron days, school feasts at the end of the school year, entertainment events, birthday, spring, New Year and June 1st celebrations, etc.



EDUCATION

The educational network in Pernik municipality is represented in its full range – from kindergartens to higher schools. Children have access to 18 all-day nurseries in the town, and half-day infant groups at the schools in smaller settlements of the municipality. Twenty primary schools function in the municipality. Characteristic for primary education in Pernik is that it provides opportunities for development of artistic talents and sports mastership, as well as vocational studies.

Representative for the town and the region are Simeon Radev Foreign Language High School and

Hristo Smirnenski Natural Science and Mathematics High School. The remaining secondary schools of general education offer specialization in several lines, such as information technologies, mathematics and biology, foreign languages, arts and sports.

In 2003, the 160th anniversary of the opening of the first secular school in Pernik was marked. Today Pernik municipality follows the tradition of maximum involvement of the children in compulsory school age – 97%. Training in the vocational schools in Pernik takes into account the traditions of the industrial town as well as the new changes in its economy. Secondary school students can choose professional lines among the opportunities offered by the 6 vocational schools of Electronics, Machine-building, Mining, Heating and Refrigerating Systems, Road and Gas-conduit Construction, Economics, Building, Catering and Tourism, and Dress-making Technology.

Pernik provides opportunities for higher education in the branch of Varna Free University, offering bachelor and master programs in Social and Economic Sciences.



Balgarche kindergarten



Constantine Cyril the Philosopher School



*Simeon Radev Foreign
Language High School*

HEALTHCARE

The first hospital in Pernik was built back in 1899. When in 1929 Pernik was promulgated a town, a 50-bed hospital was opened near the St. Pantheleimon Monastery. In 1951, a rehabilitation hospital was constructed at the foot of Golo Bardo, known as the Profilactorium. Four years later Rahila Angelova Integrated District Hospital was built. Still later, in 1988 a stomatological policlinic was opened.

Today Pernik municipality has hospital base of 600 beds, 17 ambulatory-policlinic establishments and 5 children's health centers of 224 beds. There is one physician to every 366 inhabitants of the municipality and one dentist to every 1655 inhabitants. In the municipality there are 50 pharmacies and 8 social care establishments.

Multiprofile Hospital for Post-treatment, Prolonged Treatment and Rehabilitation EOOD, Pernik



SPORT

In the nearly 100-year-long history of sports in Pernik, the following sports have been successfully developed: football, volleyball, basketball, wrestling, track-and-field athletics, sports and rhythmic gymnastics, swimming, cycling, boxing, weight-lifting, rugby, ice hockey, table tennis, chess and martial arts.

The vice-European titles won by the Minyor men's volleyball team and women's basketball team are a pride to the town. Between 1952 and 2000, 32 athletes from Pernik participated in Olympic games. Long is the list of the medal winners, the champions (some two-time), and vice-champions in Olympic games and world competitions.

From March 2000, David Horse Riding Club has been operating in Pernik. It restored a tradition that had faded some thirty years ago. The club has qual-

ified coaches and instructors and pedigree horses which have already won prestigious prizes in national and international tournaments.

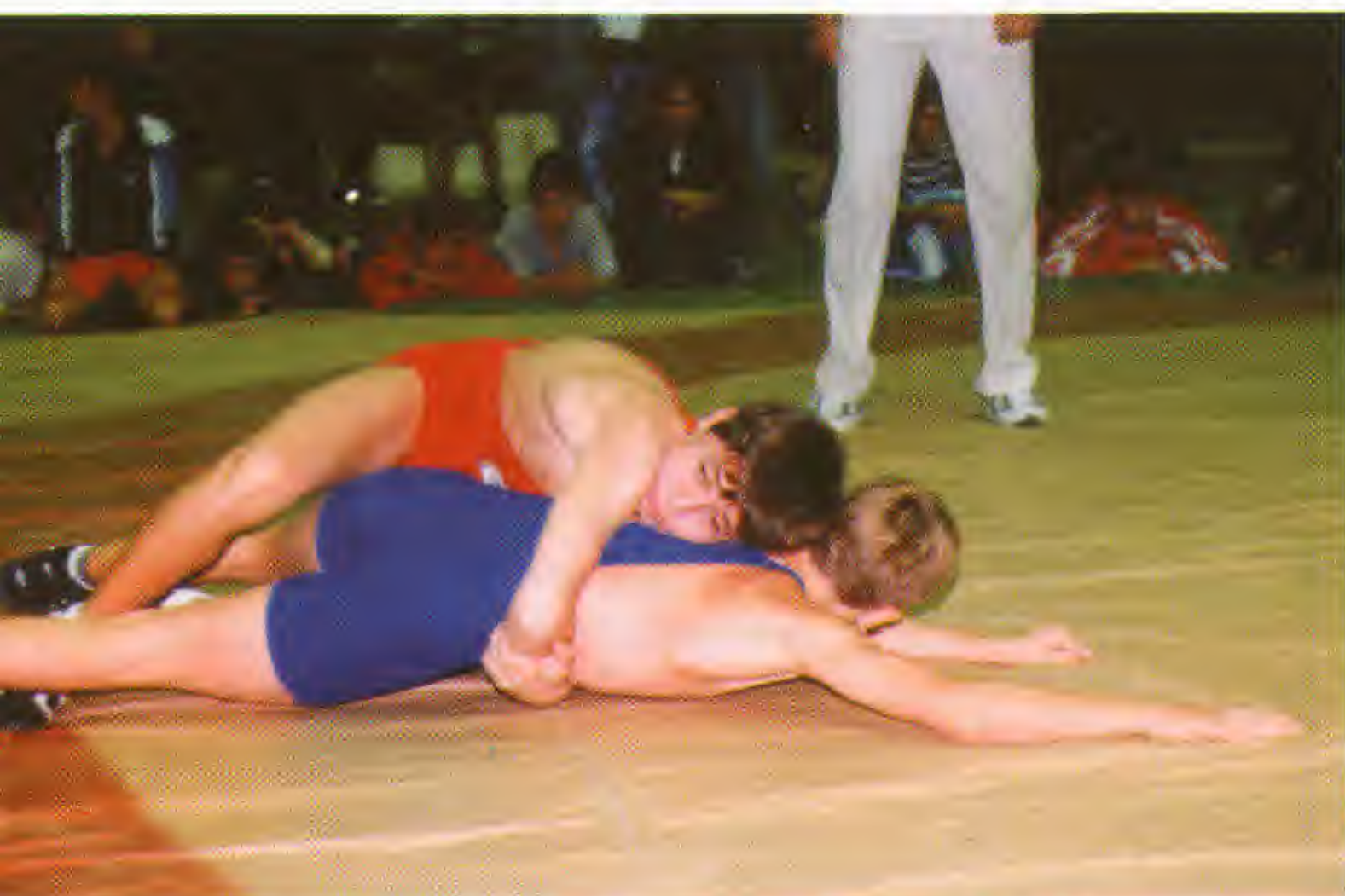
In the territory of Pernik municipality today there are 27 sports clubs and one hiking society. Sport activities involve more than 2000 sportsmen under the guidance of 61 sport teachers.

The sport base includes two stadiums with track-and-field facilities, a winter stadium, four sport halls and dozens of outdoor playgrounds. All sports have their training halls. Minyor and Metalurg sport halls are representative for the town, seated for 2000 and 500, respectively. They are suitable for large tournaments, including international, in volleyball, basketball, wrestling, judo, sports and rhythmic gymnastics.



David Horse Riding Club





*Minyor wrestling club
National Championship 2003*



*Pernik motorcycling club
Andrey Asenov, second in a national
championship and third place
in the Balkaniad in Turkey*



*Junior volleyball team. Bronze medal at
the National Championship 2003*



Minyor football club, 1983

TOURISM

The territory of Pernik municipality is situated between the mountains Vitosha, Golo Bardo and Lyulin and is rich in natural landmarks and cultural-historical heritage, mineral waters and dam lakes. It covers Pernik valley and the upper course of the river Struma, part of Vitosha National Park and Ostritsa Botanic Reserve. In the adjacent mountains there are comfortable chalets and shelters, a spa and dam lakes by the villages of Studena, Meshtitsa, Yardjilovtsi and Leskovets. The combination of these factors provides ideal conditions for hiking, rest and recreation.

Varbitsa Chalet, 80 beds, is near Studena. There is also a nice chalet in the village of Krlev Dol. Outside this village a Roman villa was uncovered, inhabited from the beginning of 3rd c. to the end of 5th c.

CAVES



DUHLATA CAVE

It is in the vicinity of Bosnek village and is the longest cave in Bulgaria. Galleries of length 17.5 km at seven prime levels with six underground rivers and streams have been explored in this remarkable cave so far. It is a unique and intricate labyrinth of narrow passages, large halls and rivers. Over 50 halls of area more than 50 sq. m have been found in it. The cave entrance is by the road Bosnek-Chuypetlyovo.

VRELOTO CAVE

Water monochannel cave in the Bosnek Karst area. It is 5.3 km long but the underground river has been studied down to 1.6 km. Speleologists have found many halls in it, called by poetic and mysterious names such as Dear Friends, Magicians' Hall, the Hall of the Big Precipices, the former being the largest known in Bulgaria. Speleologists also found a large grave of prehistoric animals in the area of Vreloto Cave.

LIFE-GIVING WATER CAVE

Its entrance is some 5 km to the north of the village of Bosnek among large age-old trees. The cave was found in 1928. It goes down only to a depth of 250 m. It is convenient and safe for entering. The





gallery ends in a spacious hall. Within 200 m from its entrance is the homonymous spring.

KARST SPRINGS

In the Bosnek Karst area there are many Karst springs, notably: Popov Izvor, which flows into the river Struma before Studena Dam, and Vreloto, which flows directly into the dam lake. Near the village of Bosnek on Vitosha Mountain there is a remarkable Karst spring called Life-Giving Water. Its water is inconstant and is believed to have miraculous power and to bring happiness.

There are many legends about this spring. According to one of several centuries ago, there was a fountain there which poured out water lavishly when righteous people approached it and dried up when sinners came.

SELIMITSA CHALET

It is on the southwestern slopes of Vitosha Mountain in the locality of Lenishtata under Selimitsa peak. The chalet is among a broad-leaved and conifer-



ous forest at 1305 m a.s.l. Built in 1930 by the "Golo Bardo" Pernik branch of the Bulgarian Tourists hiker



Union. A blazed path leads from it to Cherni Vrah and the chalets Ostritsa and Rudnichar. In the vicinity of Selimitsa chalet there is a well-kept park. In winter the chalet provides easy access to skiing courses.

SLAVEY CHALET

It is situated under Ranchovo Gradishte peak in Golo Bardo Mountain. It is a good starting point for the locality of Belite Kladentsi and Ranchovo Gradishte, where there are ruins of a medieval fortress of dimensions 130 x 100 m. The chalet was built by the Pernik tourist society "Krakra Pernishki".





The Ostritsa reserve is not far away.

On the slopes of Vitosha, Lyulin and Golo Bardo mountains in the territory of Pernik municipality there are many shelters with tables, benches and fireplaces at the disposal of hikers, notably Diviyat Bik (Wild Bull) and Mecha Cheshma (Bear's Fountain).

OSTRITSA BOTANIC RESERVE

The beautiful area of Ostritsa with unique plant species is situated in the Golo Bardo mountain massif. It was promulgated botanic reserve in 1934. Ostritsa Reserve has a total area of 600 decares and so far 362 plant species and subspecies have been registered in it, belonging to 212 genera and 56 families. Several flower species are endemic.





RUDARTSI RESORT



HUNTING AND FISHING

Vitoshko reserve offers splendid conditions for hunting tourism and recreation. In 1971, Vitoshko residence was built on the land of Popovo village which was abandoned in the 1950s. Since 1990 the residence and the reserve are managed by Vitoshko State Game-breeding Unit which is in the structure of the National Forestry Administration. Today there functions Vitoshko-Studena State Game-breeding Station and a mountain trout breeding-pond.



Trout breeding-pond









Vitoshko-Studena State Game-breeding Station



TRANSPORT AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Pernik municipality has a well-developed network of first-, second- and third-class roads. The major transport link for the town is E-79 highway which crosses the town. The railway lines Sofia–Pernik–Blagoevgrad–Petrich and Sofia–Pernik–Gyueshevo are of great economic importance. Pernik is in a strategic position for the construction of Trans-European

Corridor IV. The municipality is at a distance of 30 km from Sofia Airport and 450 km from the Bulgarian river and sea ports.

Telecommunications are well-developed in the territory of Pernik municipality. There are one digital and several analogue telephone exchanges which are interlinked. All mobile phone operators have coverage.



The Central Post Office of Pernik

TWINNED TOWNS OF PERNIK

Balashikha – Russia
Elektrostal – Russia
Lugansk – Ukraine
Lyublin – Poland
Orsha – Belarus
Rozaje – Serbia and Monte Negro
Baka al Garbia – Israel
Nilyufer – Turkey
Ovar – Portugal
Phenson – North Korea





ECONOMY

The renovated building of Stomana Industry AD, Pernik

In the past, industry in the municipality was based on coal mining and the related metallurgy, power generation and machine-building. The glass, cement, and food industries were well developed. In the last ten years, the economy of Pernik municipality has been undergoing restructuring. The share of the industrial branches traditional for Pernik as ferrous metallurgy, coal mining, machine-building, electric power generation and large-scale construction drops drastically, while the share of the light industry, trade and services grows.

Two are the main characteristics of the economy of Pernik municipality. Firstly, a strong sense for the basic macroeconomic tendencies, the state of the banking system and capital markets, the dynamics of

domestic and foreign demand, direct foreign investments. Secondly, high dependence on subsidies from the national budget and the funds accessible under the EU pre-accession programs and other international financing.

In the beginning of 2004, the larger functioning industrial enterprises are: Pernik Mines EAD, Toplofikatsia-Pernik EAD, Elektrorazpredelenie EAD, Stomana Industry AD, etc. The food industry plants are doing well, particularly the meat processing ones. Wood-processing plants and workshops also operate in the municipality, in preparation is the production of seeds and seedlings of local and foreign forest-tree species suitable to the climatic conditions of the region.



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INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF MASQUERADE GAMES

It is held in Pernik every even year on the first Saturday and Sunday after Vasilovden (January 1), when sourva games are played. During the international festival Bulgarian and foreign folk groups march in procession in the main street of Pernik, performing traditional rituals. With their exuberant costumes and fantastic masks, to the constant ring of bells and rattles they perform ancient rites of chasing away evil and the triumph of reborn life with the beginning of spring and the associated hopes of man for better harvest and better life.

Since 1995 Pernik is member of the Foundation of European Carnival Cities seated in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The Pernik festival is on the international calendar of the foundation and is highly assessed by it.







Folklore group from Hungary





CULTURAL CALENDAR OF THE TOWN OF PERNIK

January 14 – Local Sourva Celebrations

January – International Festival of Masquerade Games
(every even year)

March 3 – National Holiday of the Republic of Bulgaria
Easter Holidays

May – May Cultural Days

May 15–25 – Days of Slavonic Culture with the participation
of twinned towns from the Slav countries

June – Chicho Stoyan Children's Day

May-August – Summer cultural vacation

October 1–15 – Rudartsi International Painting Pleinair

October 19 – the Day of Pernik

November 1–30 – November Music Days

December – Christmas and New Year season

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With the cooperation of:

Pernik Municipality,

Slavka Georgieva – Director of Palace of Culture Municipal Complex,

Angelina Pavlova – Director of Comprehensive Children's Complex,

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